THE FIRST REGISTERED MOTOR VEHICLES IN BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
OCTOBER 1915 TO JULY 1916
by Kenneth J. Hughes

EARLY MOTOR TRANSPORTATION IN BROWARD COUNTY
In 1893, when the horseless carriage was going through trials of acceptance, Frank Stranahan established a ferry and a trading post along the banks of New River. Here, a small community emerged from the pine woods. And in 1896, when competitive automobile manufacturers were making sound investments in Detroit, Henry Flagler’s railroad was completed to Miami, bringing new settlers and shipping produce to northern markets. Since that time, the development of the automobile and its positive effects on south Florida have been a storybook affair.

Fort Lauderdale became a booming agricultural town with the initiation of Everglades drainage in the early years of the twentieth century. New and fertile farmlands dotted the riverbanks, but roads were non-existent. In effect, the Studebaker wagon was king. Yet, times—they were changing. Roads were improved, and the automobile soon became the preferred mode of travel.

The first automobile in Fort Lauderdale was a Glide, purchased by Reed A. Bryan in 1906. It must have been a grand new convenience for the owner and a unique attraction on the unpaved avenues of downtown Fort Lauderdale. Local records indicate Reed’s Glide was still on the road when Broward County came into existence in 1915. Notably, the Bryan family had arrived on New River during 1895 and were somewhat responsible for the community’s success with their hotel and other business ventures. Growth was inevitable, and Fort Lauderdale was incorporated in 1911. The new town was small, and the first automobiles were sold through agents from Miami.

In 1911, H. Gilbert Wheeler opened a garage on Brickell Avenue in downtown Fort Lauderdale, apparently in conjunction with his new mercantile establishment. Reed A. Bryan purchased his first REO from this establishment. Later in the decade, the Broward County Garage and Automobile Company operated at or near the location of Wheeler’s Garage. It is uncertain if H.G. Wheeler had an affiliation with the Broward County Garage and Automobile Company. Neither can we find proof that Wheeler sold automobiles after 1912. Nevertheless, information in the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society archives regarding R.A. Bryan’s REO purchase indicates that H. Gilbert Wheeler was the first automobile dealer in present-day Broward County.

Established in 1915, the same year the Dixie Highway opened down the Florida east coast, Broward County grew up with the automobile. The county’s first motor vehicle registration record, covering the period from October 1915 to July 1916, provides an abundance of details on the types of vehicles operating, their owners and uses. By analyzing this data, as well as contemporary newspaper articles, advertisements and physical artifacts, Kenneth J. Hughes reconstructs the automotive history of Broward County’s first year.

Mr. Hughes, a former Broward County Historical Commissioner and contributor to several past issues of Broward Legacy, has done extensive research, both historical and archaeological, into the county’s past. This article is an abridgement of his booklet by the same name, which is available from the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society gift shop.
A NEW COUNTY AND MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION

In 1914, the communities of Deerfield and Pompano were in Palm Beach County, while Dania, Davie, Fort Lauderdale, Hallandale, and Progresso were situated in Dade County. The border between these two jurisdictions followed an east-west trail later known as Floranada Road.

By 1915, with the opening of drained Everglades lands, these communities had increased in population sufficiently enough to gain voting strength. This happened during a crucial era in south Florida history when much local political interest centered on expenditures and prohibition. One particularly divisive issue concerned the taxation of Fort Lauderdale area citizens to provide for a deep-water port at Miami. When Miami area leaders blocked initial efforts to create a new county from the northern portion of Dade, Fort Lauderdale interests promoted county-wide prohibition. Since the Miami hotels and tourist resorts wanted unrestricted alcohol sales, this tactic paved the way for the creation of a new county.

Thus, Broward County was established on October 1, 1915 from parts of Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Fort Lauderdale became the county seat. During this transition, new civil records were established and maintained. These responsibilities included the licensing of motor vehicles. In 1918 the licensing process became a state responsibility, but before that date, all auto licenses were maintained and issued by Florida's counties.

The actual licensing of vehicles in Broward County was acknowledged at an organizational County Commission meeting on September 19, 1915. Besides the agenda of remodeling the courthouse and ordering jail cells, William Q. Bryan, the tax collector, filed a list of required supplies: one Register for Automobiles and Motorcycles, auto application blanks for licenses, fifty "To Hire" automobile license plates, 250 "Owner's Use" automobile license plates and fifty motorcycle license plates. Subsequently, it was determined that the new county of Broward had less than 300 automobiles, trucks and buses, and not more than fifty motorcycles. This information was most likely obtained from the previous Dade County Automobile License Registration records. Several recent inquiries by historians and license plate collectors have failed to locate the whereabouts of Dade County's registrations. If these records were located, this supposition, as well as the identity of the few surviving 1915 Dade County li-

Fort Lauderdale's first automobile, Reed A. Bryan's Glide, with New River Inn in the background. ca. 1910. The baby is Reed's nephew, Perry Bryan.

Fort Lauderdale merchant
H. G. Wheeler.

license plates recovered in present-day Broward County, could be verified. We are very fortunate to have Broward County's Automobile Registrations still intact.

From these records, the reader can determine the county's most popular sources of transportation. Although the source of this information, now in the Broward County Historical Commission archives, does not indicate the year each vehicle was manufactured, it does list them by manufacturer, or sometimes, by

William Q. "Quince" Bryan, first Broward County Tax Collector.
model name. For example, any Ford automobiles on the road between 1915 and 1918 were most likely Model Rs, Model Ns or Model Ts. Other manufacturers provided similar designs to compete against Henry Ford. A few examples were Chevrolet's Baby Grand and Four Ninety, Mr. Willy's Overland, and Dodge Brothers' Touring Car. Most were powered by four or six-cylinder engines.

In contrast, some motor vehicles were rather uncommon and usually manufactured in small, unsuccessful quantities. Some, known as cyclecars, had only one or two cylinder engines and rode on motorcycle tires. One example of a cyclecar registered in young Broward County is the Grant. This and similar vehicles had a short production span ranging from 1910 to 1916, and were eventually phased out by improved development and price reduction of standard automobiles.

Notably, this survey indicates that Overland, Buick, Chalmers and Studebaker automobiles lagged behind Fords in popularity—all were running a close race for second place. The Chevrolet, rather new on the market in 1915 and 1916, was not well known or well received in Broward County; only two were registered during the first licensing sequence.

While other manufacturers were concerned about establishing a competitive edge with Ford, Henry Ford was attempting to increase the margin. He was experimenting with alcohol in developing a new fuel from which he had hoped to attain increased performance. Imagine the irony if these experiments were successful. Young Broward County—a county created in part on a "dry" no-alcohol platform—might have had 37.8% of its motor vehicles, these being Fords, powered by alcohol fuel. Even the less popular manufactured vehicles, which were quickly following the path of the dinosaur to extinction, might have been rejuvenated with a better grade of fuel.

Regardless of the popularity or the notoriety of a motor vehicle, south Florida counties were interested in establishing licensing fees satisfactory to the welfare of their taxpayers. They recognized that it would be unfair to charge a "Private Use" automobile owner the same licensing fee as the owner who used the vehicle for taxi service or transporting produce. Subsequently, county vehicle licenses were also classified on the basis of "For Hire" and "Motorcycles."

Broward County also charged licensing fees based on vehicle quality, measured in tonnage. A Ford owner who used the vehicle for "Private Use" in 1916 was charged $5.00 per year, while a Cadillac owner paid $10.00. Motorcycle owners were usually the most fortunate, having to fork over only $2.00 per year. By 1917, commercial vehicles were paying $20.00 per year.

The standard wage for common labor in 1915-17 averaged about fifteen dollars per week. Thus, most everyone's great-granddadd had to pay one-third of his weekly wages, minimum, to keep the old lizzie on the road for one year. By today's standards, the licensing fees for keeping motor vehicles on the road during 1916 were expensive. In addition, south Florida's economic conditions must have made such a payment doubly painful to great-granddadd's wallet. Although the United States had launched full steam into the industrial age, south Florida lagged behind. The region's agricultural base was susceptible to the whims of nature, and tourism was only beginning to play a major role in Broward County's economy. In the coming decade, south Florida would experience a crash and depression years before the rest of the nation.

One may also be surprised about the low number of registered motor vehicles on Broward County roads between 1915 and 1918. However, these numbers paralleled the small population. We must assume that perhaps not all vehicles were registered—especially those tucked away on remote country farms. In a region best known for agricultural resources, it is quite possible that the mules and horses still outnumbered the horseless carriages. For whatever reason, our early motorists had no need to worry about traffic jams, traffic lights or fuel shortages. Nevertheless, road conditions presented a major concern.

**THE FIRST ROADS IN BROWARD COUNTY**

The first road through what was to become Broward County was a mere trail cut through the pine woods in 1838 by Major William Lauderdale's Tennessee Volunteers and Lieutenant Robert Anderson's Third Artillery Pioneers. It was mapped by Lieutenant Frederick Searle of the U.S. Topographical Corps. This mule trail was improved for the passage of military supply wagons in 1857, during the Third Seminole War. At the same time, the first stationary bridge in what we now call Broward County was constructed across the upper reaches of the Hillsboro River by Captain Abner Doubleday—the legendary inventor of baseball.

Most travelers who visited south Florida in the later part of the nineteenth century followed the sea route or the Florida East Coast Railway to their destinations. Yet, after the turn of the century, some wealthy northerners did travel by automobiles to their winter homes in Florida, creating a demand for improved roads. The first automobile road through today's Broward County was certainly not extraordinary. Constructed in 1906, it extended more than sixty miles from Palm Beach to Miami. Very often, the road was narrow with wooden bridges crossing picturesque streams. The road was rough, but passable. However, it required constant maintenance.

The term "Rock and Roll" is not as new as some may believe. As a road building term, it has been around for quite some time. Early roads were packed with rock or similar material and rolled or compressed for hardness. Many roads in northern Florida were packed with coquina shell material. In what is today northern Palm Beach County, oyster shell from ancient Indian kitchen middens served as suitable material for both railroad beds and roads. Farther to the south, lime-
Automobile advertisements from the Fort Lauderdale and Miami newspapers in the 1910s.

The "ARGO"
Runabout costs only $375.00 delivered at Fort Lauderdale, fully equipped with lights, generator, top and windshield. It is so comfortable to ride in as a large car. Upkeep will save you 50 per cent. Runs 40 miles on a gallon of gasoline. New tires sell for $5. It is as cheap as a motorcycle and far more comfortable.

To the Prospective Auto Buyers
Before purchasing that car and get a demonstration of the wonderful

FOUR PASSENGER
ROADSTER
$985 F. O. B.
CHICAGO

"ELGIN SIX"
BUILT LIKE A WATCH

FIVE PASSENGER
TOURING
$985 F. O. B.
CHICAGO

SPECIFICATIONS: Unit power plant, 6-cylinder falls, motor cast end block, over head valves, Stromberg or Raffel carburetor, Stewart vacuum system, full floating rear axle with Brown Lipe Spiral bevel gears, 116 inch wheel base, cantilever springs. Compare these specifications, call for demonstration and you will buy an ELGIN. You owe it to yourself and your pocketbook.

BERNER & THREADGILL
Agents for Dale and Broward Counties
215 Thirteenth Street

OAKLAND SIX
STURDY AS THE OAK
$975.00 F. O. B. Ft. Lauderdale

The Sensible Six
Great power and light weight, effecting unusual performance, economy and comfort
Forty-one Horse Power at 2500 R. P. M.
TWENTY MILES TO EVERY GALLON OF GAS

Green & High Auto Company
322-324 Thirteenth St.
Mimai, Florida

Ford
THE UNIVERSAL CAR

Roadster - $433.00
Touring Car 483.00

Carload of six, the first shipment into Broward County, will arrive in a few days.

WILL S. BULLOCK, Jr., Agent.

Present location with

FT. LAUDERDALE GARAGE & MACHINE CO.
Prisoners building a Florida road, ca. 1906.

stone was plentiful and therefore substituted for this purpose. Road building offered convict labor a healthy outdoor alternative to their confinement.

Notably, one of the first tasks undertaken by Broward County's commissioners was to establish bonds to meet the many requests by the citizens to build roads throughout the new county. Better roads meant improved traveling speed. Likewise, quicker travel resulted in a higher risk of accidents.

ON EARLY MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

Whether caused by horseplay or lack of horse sense, accidents occurred just as quickly in 1916 at thirty miles per hour, as they do today at fifty-five miles an hour. For example, a young newlywed couple, Ruby and Emet Rogers, only a few hours into their new lives, were involved in an accident at the Dania railroad crossing on Dixie Highway in April. It seems the chauffeur decided to race against a motorcycle. He was unfamiliar with the dangerous road transition across the tracks, and the vehicle flipped over, injuring the driver, the bride and three others.

In October 1915, an unidentified youth received the surprise of his life when he was clotheslined at Andrews Avenue and Southwest Third Street while riding his motorcycle to school. At that time, Fort Lauderdale streets were unpaved, therefore, it was a practice to oil them down in an attempt to reduce the dust and to keep them packed. A workman was preparing to oil Southwest Third Street and Brickell Avenue and did not want to contend with the traffic. He stretched a rope across the road to cordon off the accessible perimeters to his work. Unfortunately, the cyclist did not see the rope—but felt it across his neck. In this particular accident, the results were obvious. The motorcycle continued a bit farther down the road while its rider, without a choice of his own, quickly changed his direction of travel. Yet, he was much more fortunate than newlyweds who flipped the car—being able to retrieve his ride and proceed onwards with only a few scratches.

In Dade County, a Broward citizen lost his life in a bicycle accident during 1916. He was visiting that county, preparing his properties for the real estate market. He rode a bicycle to his son's farm to tend to the horses, and on his return, fell into the path of an oncoming vehicle. Although accidents were rather remote in the late 1910s, they did occur—and sometimes, they were fatal.

EARLY AUTOMOBILE REPAIRS

Once upon a time, Henry's Fords and other automobiles were easy and inexpensive to repair. Many repairs could be accomplished at home. Diagnostics were simple too, but rather effective. Often, a vehicle in need of repair could be diagnosed simply by listening to it. This writer's grandfather once had such a job in Miami. He took the vehicles on the road, determined their problems and relayed this information to the mechanics.

Owing to the maintenance necessities of motor vehicles, a few repair garages emerged in young Broward County. Perhaps the first body repair shop in this county was attached to the local paint company, the Fort Lauderdale Mercantile Company. These industrious entrepreneurs hired a paint expert formerly employed by Dodge Motor Works in Chicago. Repair garages in Broward County between 1915 and 1918 included the following:

- Broward County Automobile & Garage Co., Brickell Avenue, near North River Drive, Fort Lauderdale.
- Broward Sales Company, Andrews Avenue South, Fort Lauderdale.
- Dania Garage, Dania.
- Fort Lauderdale Garage & Machine Company, Andrews Avenue South, Fort Lauderdale.
- E.E. Hardy, Pompano.
- C.M. Ingalls, Hallandale.
- Leaird & Pellett, Andrews Avenue North, Fort Lauderdale.

Gate City Garage AND Machine Comp'y

Automobiles Stored and Repaired.

Machine Work of All Kind.
Sheet Metal Work and Tanks Built to Order.
Buggy and Wagon Repairs.

HORSE AND MULE SHOEING.

FISSEL & RANDALL
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
NORTH BRICKELL AVE.

22—Broward Legacy
LIST OF MOTOR VEHICLES REGISTERED IN
BROWARD COUNTY
OCTOBER 1915 - JULY 1916

The Broward County Automobile Register lists seven communities as the locations for owners' motor vehicles. In addition, there are several listings for "City," which refer to Fort Lauderdale applicants. All "City" registrations are combined under the Fort Lauderdale registrations for the purposes of this breakdown, as are those for "Colohatchee," an unincorporated townsite at present-day Wilton Manors and the surrounding farming district, which included portions of today's Oakland Park and northern Fort Lauderdale. Following these lists are the countywide totals.

The original 1915-18 Broward County motor vehicle registration process did not separate the applicants from each community. It appears that applications were recorded on a first-come, first-serve basis. It is highly unlikely that applicants from other Broward County communities protested their coming to Fort Lauderdale to register their motor vehicles. After all, it was much closer than the Dade County Courthouse. It is also quite possible that, in former years, Dade County brought the registration books to the New River community and other towns to insure that all motor vehicle taxes were collected. Or, a north Dade County register may have been maintained at Fort Lauderdale. Since no Dade County registers have been located, we have not been able to verify the process.

There is also some probability that Broward County's first tax collector, W.Q. Bryan, may have traveled to each community with the register. Whatever method he incorporated to meet the registration process, we can be assured that it was as thorough as conditions allowed. On the other hand, the register reflects numerical inconsistencies. It is obvious that a few applicants were allowed to select their own number.

An example of this selectiveness among the license applicants is recorded in October 1915 when William B. Snyder registered his "Chalmers." On the register, motorcycle license plates are listed intermittently among the automobile registrations, but numbered separately. Among the listings on page two for automobiles and trucks is Snyder's out-of-numerical-sequence license issue number 100, sandwiched between Sol Bevill's license number fifty-four and H. T. Hobbs' number fifty-five. Snyder served as a real estate broker. His brother, Samuel P., was a road contractor and vice-president of Bryan and Snyder Company.

Many other community pioneer names embellish the registration book, for example, first Fort Lauderdale Mayor William Marshall, Sheriff Aden W. Turner and Ft. Lauderdale's prominent pioneer, Frank Stranahan. If it satisfies one's curiosity, Stranahan owned a Buick. He was issued license number fifty-one.

The following data represents Broward County's first vehicle registrations from October 5, 1915 to July 1916. No additional registrations were recorded for the rest of the fiscal year, from July to the end of September. Registrations were subsequently recorded beginning at the start of each fiscal year, October 1 of 1916 and 1917. The last entries in the registration book were logged in January 1918. After that date, the State of Florida maintained statewide vehicle registrations.
Frank Stranahan’s 1912 Dade County license (courtesy of Stranahan House).

THE LIST

**Dania Motor Vehicles**

**Automobiles:** Buick 1; Chalmers 1; Chevrolet 2; Detroiter 1; Ford 16; Hupmobile 1; King 1; Maxwell 1; Overland 5; Saxon 2; Studebaker 2.

**Motorcycles:** Excelsior 2; Harley Davidson 1; Indian 1; Pope 1; Reading Standard 1.

**Trucks and Buses:** White (one and a half ton) 1.

Total automobiles = 33
Total motorcycles = 10
Total trucks and buses = 1

**Davie Motor Vehicles**

**Automobiles:** Chalmers 1; EMF (Studebaker) 1; Ford 3.

**Motorcycles:** Indian 1.

**Trucks and Buses:** REO 1.

Total automobiles = 5
Total motorcycles = 1
Total trucks and buses = 1.

**Deerfield Motor Vehicles**

**Automobiles:** Buick 1; Ford 2; Hudson 1; Maxwell 1; Overland.

**Motorcycles:** Harley Davidson 1.

Total automobiles = 6
Total motorcycles = 1
Total trucks and buses = 0

**Fort Lauderdale Motor Vehicles**

**Automobiles:** Allen 5; Argo 1; Auburn 1; Buick 8; Cadillac 5; Chalmers 1; Detroiter 1; Dodge 3; EMF (Studebaker) 2; Flanders 3; Ford 42; Grant 1; Glide 1; Henderson; Hudson 3; Hupmobile 3; Marathon 1; Maxwell 1; Metz 2; Oldsmobile 1; Overland 8; Packard 1; Rainier 1; Saxon 5; Schoks [Schacht] 1; Selden (five passenger) 1; Stoddard [Stoddard/Dayton] 1; Studebaker 3; Velie 1.

**Motorcycles:** Excelsior 3; Harley Davidson 5; Indian 7; Miami (Merkle) 2; Thor 8.

**Trucks and Buses:** Buick (1000 pound) 1; Commerce (1000 pound) 1; Dart (three ton) 1; Ford (1000 pound) 3; GMC (one and a half ton) 1; International (one ton); Packard Truck (three ton) 1; REO (1000 pound) 5; Sampson (one and a half ton) 1; Selden (five passenger) 1; White 3.

Total automobiles = 115
Total motorcycles = 25
Total trucks and buses = 20

**Hallandale Motor Vehicles**

**Automobiles:** Flanders 2; Ford 4; Herschoff 1; Marion 1; Overland 1; Studebaker 3.

**Motorcycles:** Excelsior 5; Indian 1; Thor 1.

**Trucks and Buses:** Oldsmobile (1000 pound) 1; Republic (two ton) 1.

Total automobiles = 12
Total motorcycles = 7
Total trucks and buses = 2

**Pompano Motor Vehicles**

**Automobile:** Buick 5; Chalmers 1; Dodge 1; EMF (Studebaker) 1; Ford 9; Hudson 1; Hupmobile 1; Mitchell 1; Overland 4; Rambler 1; Regal 1; Ress Hupp [Rex Hupmobile] 1; Velie 1; unrecorded 1.

**Motorcycles:** Harley Davidson 1; Indian 2.

**Trucks and Buses:** Indiana Truck (one ton) 1; Oldsmobile (1000 pound) 1.

Total automobiles = 30
Total motorcycles = 3
Total trucks and buses = 2

**Countywide Motor Vehicle Totals**

**Automobiles:** Allen 5; Argo 1; Auburn 1; Buick 15; Cadillac 5; Chalmers 10; Chevrolet 2; Cole 1; Detroiter 2; Dodge 4; EMF (Studebaker) 4; Flanders 5; Ford 76; Grant 1; Glide 1; Henderson 1; Herschoff 1; Hudson 5; Hupmobile 5; King 1; Marathon 1; Marion 1; Maxwell 3; Metz 2; Mitchell 1; Oak­land 1; Oldsmobile 1; Overland 19; Packard 1; Rainier 1; Rambler 1; Regal 1; Ress Hupp [Rex Hupmobile] 1; Saxon 7; Schoks [Schacht] 1; Selden (five passenger) 1; Stoddard [Stoddard/Dayton] 1; Studebaker 8; Velie 2; unrecorded 1.

**Motorcycles:** Excelsior 10; Harley Davidson 8; Indian 16; Miami (Merkle) Motorbike 2; Pope 1; Reading Standard 1; Thor 9.

**Trucks and Buses:** Buick (1000 pound) 2; Commerce (1000 pound) 1; Dart (three ton) 1; Ford (1000 pound) 3; GMC (one and a half ton) 1; Indiana Truck (one ton) 1; International (1000 pound) 2; Oldsmobile (1000 pound) 2; Packard Truck (three ton) 1; REO (1000 pound) 6; Republic (two ton) 1; Sampson (one ton) 1; Selden (one and a half ton) 1; White (one and a half ton) 4.

Total automobiles = 201
Total motorcycles = 47
Total trucks and buses = 26

**DESCRIPTION OF MOTOR VEHICLES REGISTERED IN BROWARD COUNTY, OCTOBER 1915 - JULY 1916**

The early development of the automobile grew with leaps and bounds between the 1890s and 1916. Early vehicles were manufactured with one and two cylinder engines. These were improved to four and six cylinders. Chain driven transmissions evolved into shaft driven units. Wooden wheels developed into steel wheels, hard rubber tires into pneumatic tires, and tiller steering into...
JOY OF THE OPEN ROAD

Here's the Handsome Auto

Overland

75

That is going to a Live Contestant

CHEVROLET CARS
Have Advanced in Price

We have a few new 4-passenger which, we will
deliver during next week at the old price.

Buy One Today

$620.00

Delivered in Ft. Lauderdale
Dean Motor Co.

314-16 Eleventh St.

Miaml, FL.

CHEMICALS and FUELS

r

Here's the Handsome Auto

That is going to a Live Contestant

right and left hand steering wheel systems.

Additional breakthroughs in development included items which were once considered luxuries and, of course, were optional. Manual starters yielded to electric starters, and electric lighting systems made gas lighting obsolete. Spare tires, as well as jacks and tool kits, eventually became standard equipment.

Automobile styling also took precedence in early development, although there were many similarities among the different manufacturers. For example, competitively priced cars were usually available in two body styles—the two to four person roadster or the five to seven person touring car. Some companies producing higher priced automobiles, such as Cadillac and Packard, offered unique features such as Landaulette style bodies, attractive grills and equally attractive lights and paint finishes. Tonneau tops of Mohair were standard for the workingman's automobile. These could be substituted with demountable hard winter tops or permanently closed automobiles. Hence, many automobile companies offered both open and closed models. If these were out of financial reach or simply did not satisfy our pioneer consumers, cyclecars were available.

Cyclecars were manufactured in the United States between 1910 and 1916, and were comparable to bicycles and motorcycles. They were lightweight with two-cylinder air-cooled engines or four-cylinder water-cooled engines. Most were two-passenger vehicles. They used motorcycle tires, and some used belt drives, rather than the usual chains or drive shafts. Most were capable of traveling forty to fifty miles on a gallon of gas. These were the first economy cars. Only one other form of motor vehicle, the motorcycle, could guarantee improved economy.

Early vintage automobiles are rare, but antique motorcycles are more so. The earliest this writer has seen in a private collection was a 1911 Indian. Between 1912 and 1917 motorbikes advanced rapidly in design, size and performance. Each represent beautiful gems, with their
own specialized features, unlike the competitive models manufactured today. In local motorcycle advertisements, each manufacturer claimed their product was the fastest, and one claimed their product was the cleanest. In reality, they could be more economical and practical than automobiles, owing to the condition of our early roads, unless, of course, one had to convey more than one person or a large amount of cargo.

American trucks, from 1910 to 1917, were simple in style and strong in construction. Sizes ranged from half and three-quarter ton delivery wagons, to the six-ton Packard Haulers. Somewhere in the middle were the ever-resilient two-ton REO farm and cargo trucks. The early trucks had single and dual chain drive systems. These soon made way for the drive shaft designs. Some small trucks in early Broward County were converted automobiles. Several manufacturers offered these conversion options. The largest trucks in Broward County's first automobile registration weighed three tons.

BROWARD COUNTY
BUSINESSES THAT USED
MOTOR VEHICLES
IN THEIR TRADES
OCTOBER 1915 - JULY 1916

The numerous truck and heavy vehicle listings comprise another interesting reference in the automobile register. The records either indicate the owner's name or a business name. The latter is unique for it defines Broward County's citizen work force, and reveals businesses of necessity during the county's earliest years. Businesses licensing trucks included:

Aden Waterman Turner, Sheriff
Blount Brothers, Farmers
Broward Grocery Company
C. Edwd. Dugall & Bros., Farmers
Crow Bottling Company
Fairacres Stock Farm
Fort Lauderdale Laundry Co.
Hector Supply Co., Agriculture
Lee J. Spear, Farmer
Myers Michallo
New River Fruit Company
Oliver Brothers Company
Palm Beach Mercantile Co.

Schull & Dillard, Farmers
Standard Oil Company
Tubbs & Johnston,
Fruit Packer/Shipper
W.C. Kyle, Broward County Bank
White Star Auto Line
Witherall & Okhurst
W.J. Brandon & Son

COUNTY LICENSE PLATES
AND SUCH

In recent years, evidence of early Broward County automania has been discovered during the redevelopment of the downtown district and adjacent residential neighborhoods. The most recognizable artifacts are the early porcelain-coated license plates. Other items include mechanical parts belonging to automobiles, trucks and motorcycles, among these such identifiers as vehicle manufactured plates and labeled, wheel grease caps.

Although such evidence is somewhat scarce, Ford wheel caps are more common than those belonging to early Chevrolets, owing to the popularity of the former. A particularly rare identifier surfaced recently along Brickell Avenue in downtown Fort Lauderdale, when a grease cap was recovered from a "Brush." The Brush was a cyclecar manufactured by Brush Motor Car Company of Detroit between 1907 and 1913. It was a popular two-seat, coil spring, chain-driven vehicle with solid tires and wooden frame axles.

The Brush was powered by a one-cylinder, twelve horsepower engine and could travel fifty miles on a gallon of gasoline.

This cyclecar, designed by Alanson R. Brush, sold for a price ranging from $350 to $780. Later models had pneumatic tires and larger engines. Landaulettes bodies were available on the Brush and manufactured as Titan taxicabs. The Brush Company merged into the U.S. Motor Works, which failed in 1913. This vehicle represents an early form of motor transportation used in Fort Lauderdale at least two years before the formation of Broward County.

In 1914, vehicle owners residing south of present-day Floranada Road were issued blue Dade County license plates with white numbers and lettering. In 1915, the Dade County plates were a bright yellow with black numbers and lettering. The first Broward County license plates, with white numbers and letters on a pale green background, were most likely ordered from the supply list submitted at the September 19, 1915 county commission meeting by W.Q. Bryan.

How and when the first Broward County license plates were issued remains uncertain. Because registrations for Broward County began on October 5, 1915, only two weeks after the request for plates was submitted to the County Commission, it is possible that temporary

W.C. LEAIRD
WALLACE KING

LEAIRD & KING
Agents for
Thor and Indian Motorcycles
Buy a Motorcycle on Payments---$50 down
In Berryhill Building
Andrews Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale
1915 Dade County license plate, discovered by the author and now in the collection of the Broward County Historical Commission.

Vehicle registrations were issued and vehicle operators continued using the 1915 Dade County plates until the new plates arrived.

The 1917 Broward County license plate consisted of yellow lettering on a black background while neighboring Palm Beach County issued a license plate consisting of white letters on a black background. It is unknown if a 1918 Broward County-issued license plate ever existed. Registration did occur from October 1917 to January 1918, and these numbers represented the full complement of vehicles in the county including some new additions. It is possible that this data was submitted to the State of Florida to begin the new registration procedure, but to date, no information has surfaced to verify the closing process. Subsequently, we can only assume that 1918 porcelain license plates never were issued.

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